



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# THE FUGITIVE

BY HERMANN HAGEDORN

---

Lights, lights and faces, wheels, and faint, far stars!  
Tumult and shouts and ever the surging crowds  
Struggling, with shrieks of laughter and wild horns,  
Rattles and rustle of impertinent plumes,  
Whistles and calls and perfume like strong poison.  
Lights! In the streets the glare, and in the sky  
Orgies of tumbling and upsoaring blaze,  
Magnificently tawdry. Everywhere,  
White lights to keep the ghosts away; bright lights,  
To dazzle maidens, blind exultant youths,  
Stir sleeping demons, make the ducats dance!  
Lights for the dead, white lights for the white dead!

She stood, she turned. Between the shuffling crowds  
Unsteadily a minute, back and forth  
She swayed, and laughed with impudent red mouth  
At one man's whistle and another's plume,  
At one man's banter, and another's kiss,  
Elbowing right and left till she stood clear.  
She caught her breath. Her hat hung by one pin  
Loosely in her dishevelled, heavy hair.  
She drew back, took it off, and looked about.  
The crowd was just the crowd. The boy was gone.  
A block back somewhere some lightheaded thing  
Had knocked his hat off, and for all she knew  
Carried him off with her. He was fair game;  
And there were other men with rolls to spend,  
She said; and chewed her hatpins like a bit,  
Glad for the minute to stand still, and watch  
The wild midwinter madness surge and toss;  
Glad to be silent, to be free, to breathe,  
To fix her hair and subjugate her hat.  
Lights, lights and faces! Without end, the crowd  
Shuffled and jostled past her, blowing horns

Like angels of derision, trumping doom.  
 She laughed to see how drunk most of them were.  
 The new year would grin down on many a Judge,  
 Rapping for order in distracted heads—  
 Hang-overs. Yes. And hers would be the worst,  
 Since underneath the laughter of the phrase  
 Something more real than stomach-penitence  
 Would stir and speak, refusing to be still.  
 She laughed for spite and blew her horn, and laughed;  
 Sending her eyes exploring for a purse  
 To buy her cakes and ale. Her eyes were dark,  
 Deep, purple, laughter-like, alluring eyes;  
 Torches of heaven yet unquenched, or quenched,  
 So far removed from earth that still their light  
 Beat through dark nights as from the living stars.  
 She saw dead eyes make answer; with a laugh,  
 Repelling, heaven knew why, the masks that came,  
 Gift-bearing for her favor: blank, dead eyes,  
 Gross lips that tooted horns.

And still the sea

In two strong currents swept the faces past.  
 She saw the boy press, searching, through the crowd,  
 And her heart opened. He was seeking her.  
 Her eyes spoke, but her lips were dumb. She stood,  
 Cold as a dead tree, rigid as a wall.  
 She saw his head a minute, clear and firm  
 Above the crowd, the clean and eager chin,  
 Tilted a little, seeking purer air—  
 The crowd surged on, the suitors swore and went.  
 The horns blew louder; whistles from the bay  
 Tooted harsh greeting to the infant year.  
 Ten thousand voices bellowed; then once more,  
 Horns, horns and whistles, rattles and horns, horns!  
 Midnight! New Year! A new life! Horns, horns, horns!

She shook herself and laughed, cold to the marrow:  
 Laughter ironic, cynical, amused,  
 At scruples, waking rather late, she thought;  
 And, late or soon, alien to such as she  
 Who looked to purses, not to cheeks and eyes.  
 She smiled, but through the smile's coarse mockery  
 Peered something deeper, softening the lines  
 And brightening lashes with a hint of tears.  
 The boy was clear and clean to look upon.  
 He could make even base and bartered love  
 Smell sweet an hour. Why had she let him go,

Pass into night and distance, fade like steam  
Out of a liner's siren in the air,  
Back to his own world, clean for a clean girl?  
Why had she let such living eyes escape,  
Such living lips, such laughter like buds blowing?  
Only a little would her love have tarnished  
The too bright gold; only a little edged  
With ashy blight the rose's outer leaf.  
Would he have missed the little gold she wanted?  
Well, he was gone, sunk into night and time,  
And God alone knew what perversity  
Of indolence, or impulse gone awry  
Had stayed her tongue, her feet. Well, he was gone.  
Another purse would pay for her champagne.  
She gasped, half sobbing; laughed, and wondered, whose?

Along Broadway the horns boomed to the moon.  
Across Times Square the crowd swayed, struggled, surged.  
Northward and southward flowed the turgid streams.  
She chose the southward current, loud and gay,  
Blowing her horn, making her rattle sound;  
Conscious no horns were blowing in her heart,  
No rattles beating madness through her veins,  
Yet too much child of the hilarious glare  
To walk with solemn eyes when Broadway laughed.  
She played her part. About her blew the horns  
In Herald Square, about her lurched the crowds;  
About her beat with flapping of loose sails  
The tragic chattering of helmless ships.  
She drifted southward with bleak aimlessness,  
Suddenly lonely and depressed and sick  
Of noise and streets and drunken men. The lights  
Suddenly seemed to drive into her bones  
Like gusts around street-corners. She went on.  
The crowd grew thin, the noise at last was mute,  
Save at long intervals, faint, far away,  
A broken blast, a harsh and drunken cry.  
She walked, and scarcely knew she walked. A clock  
Struck musically, and above, a globe  
High over men and houses and bare boughs,  
Flashed one and two. She neither heard nor saw.  
A gust about the Flatiron caught her hat  
That tugged, balloon-wise, fiercely at her hair.  
She bent her head and beat into the wind,  
Onward, and knew not whither and not why,  
Impelled by something stronger than desire  
Into the empty, wind-blown wilderness.

A Voice, within, said something.

She stopped dead,  
And stood a minute with her eyes half closed  
As one who listens for the fiery robes  
Of spirits passing by. She knew that Voice,  
That was so grave, and always questioned her.  
This was not conscience. This was not a whip.  
This was a friendly voice. It was a child's,  
Sometimes, and now a girl's and now a woman's.  
She heard it, cool and clear as bells at night.

Over her heart despair rolled in black waves.  
Malicious tongues hooted, satiric mouths  
Muttered, "Too late!" Derisive, leering lips  
Shouted, "Remorse? What did you have to eat?"  
She heard that friendly Someone questioning;  
And venomously answering, the tongues  
Malignantly with blow on bitter blow  
Hurled defamation. Once it seemed to her  
The Voice did more than question. Quietly,  
Yet with assurance, as though every word  
Bore heaven's great seal attesting God's assent,  
It said absurd and wonderful, kind things  
That were all lies, calling her true and pure  
And of sweet promise—

And again despair  
Swept her with wallowing, green, blinding seas  
That left her shuddering; and again the Voice  
Came and she hearkened, fighting to hear more.

The night was cold. In Union Square, the boughs  
Crackled, ice-laden. Dark, deserted, bare,  
Were streets and houses and the clouding heaven.  
Far to the south, a car along cold rails  
Clanked harshly, lonely; a motor-horn  
Honked on Fifth Avenue; somewhere, quick steps  
Rang hollowly on pavement and were mute.  
Fear of the bleak, unnatural emptiness  
Woke in her soul. She ran. Her quick, short steps  
Sounded like tumult of armed hosts in flight;  
And frightened she stood still, lest at the sound  
Indignantly the slumbering city wake.

Again the Voice, more searching and more near,  
The questioning like true-love's hand-in-hand  
Or eye-in-eye, tender beyond lip-speech.  
She fled, despair at one ear, crying, "Damned!"

Derision at the other, crying, " Fooled ! "   
A wilderness of windows dimly lit   
Lay stretched before her, sloping vaguely down.   
She fled. Along the narrow, infinite hell,   
Walled into darkness upward beyond sight,   
Were faces, white things, orbs of soulless fire !   
Between the files of icy eyes she fled.   
Higher the walls rose, limitless in night   
Above her ; limitless in night before   
The lights ran on to unilluminated chaos.   
She fled. The friendly Voice rose to a cry   
That shook her soul and broke against its walls   
Into a thousand shards of mocking laughter.   
Despair cried out, " Now are you satisfied ? "   
Derision jeered, " Now do you know yourself ? "   
She fled with stumbling steps and riotous heart.

Once more about her now were stars and trees,   
A shining clock-face, towers ; across the street,   
A lighted restaurant, a sleepy maw,   
Yawning behind the plate-glass door, a voice   
Calling a paper shrilly out of space ;   
And shadowy, dim, among dim, shadowy trees   
Hurrying shreds of night blown on the wind,   
Figures of men. All these she saw or heard   
Like people met in dreams ; but still went on,   
Suddenly conscious that the tongues were still,   
That there was no more riot in her heart,   
But one Voice only ; and that roundabout   
The pitiless walls had by some miracle   
Been gloriously transmuted into spires,   
Mysterious and holy. Like a nave   
Broadway stretched out into the solemn dark.   
Its silence was the silence of a church,   
Merciful, beatific ; and its lights   
Were tapers, pure and calm as angel's eyes,   
Watching the sacred tourney men call life.   
She went, with lifted, eager, awestruck face.   
Her heart was calm at last. Despair was dumb.   
Shame, fear, derision had no arguments   
Left to dismay her. With no thought of scorn   
She let the Voice within her tell her tales   
So strange, so full of wonder, that her feet   
Forgot their heaviness and seemed as wings,   
And nothing seemed behind her but the dark,   
And nothing seemed before her but the day.

And now once more she stood amid bare trees.  
A biting wind blew at her hat and skirt.  
She did not mind the wind, she did not hear  
Its whistle and low wail, nor at her feet  
The swish and beat of broken harbor-waves  
Against the Battery wall. She saw no waves,  
No shadowy ships, no shadowy Liberty,  
Guarding the great dream-town. She felt the dark  
Slip like a host defeated from her soul;  
She felt the tread of sullen steps; she heard  
The tread of steps retreating; faint with joy,  
She heard the black invader with blurred drums  
Draw back forever from her tortured heart.  
She gasped, for round her being there was light.  
She sank upon a bench. Her head span round.  
She seemed to drink the light in through her pores;  
Along her veins she felt the glory rush;  
And in a flash like lightning saw herself  
Through God's eyes . . .

Day arose and dimmed the stars,  
And woke the towers from slumber, and the spires,  
The boats, the wharves, the wagons, windows, streets.  
With creak and whistle, rumble and sharp call  
The City's gaunt machinery began  
Slowly to turn its lesser wheels; the cogs  
Met, groaning. Through the Narrows came  
The new year sailing in a golden ship . . .

HERMANN HAGEDORN.